

Commission Comments by Ted Coffman
The Bridges of Madison County

Over the past few years the Commission has tried to be very proactive in replacing many bridges in the County. We have worked with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP), and, of course, local milled Bridge Levy funds.

The best “Deal” of course is MDT off system bridge replacement which utilizes Federal money. The funds are very limited but Madison County has been very fortunate in replacing two bridges at Glen, two in the Silver Star area, one at Indian Creek (Madison side), and the Three Dollar Bridge with a span from the Sappington Bridge, all at no cost to Madison County. Also the rehabilitation of the Historic Hutchins Bridge in the upper Madison fell under the same program.

We have replaced two bridges with FEMA funds which requires a 25% local match, but those opportunities are limited.

TSEP is funded by Coal Trust Funds, with 50% match from the County which may be “in kind” work, and funded through the State Legislature. In 2003 Madison County was funded for three bridges and in 2005 for six bridges. Right now we are applying for 2007 funds to replace four bridges. We started with five but during our public hearing we got a surprise phone call from MDT telling us that one of the major bridges was being programmed for replacement in 2011 with off system funds.

Madison County has been using some PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) funds to supplement your tax dollars for matching funds for the TSEP program. Some smaller wooden bridges have been replaced with concrete box culverts and some metal culverts.

The continuing saga of the Bridges of Madison County – fences and river access chapter will continue another day.